

Grace Works, Part 1 - Romans 4:1-3 - September 11th, 2011

- I've chosen a most descriptive title for this new series in this new chapter and it may go down as the shortest and simplest ever; "Grace Works."
- While I realize that this sounds like an oxymoron, or a paradox, the fact of the matter is; works won't work, because it's only grace that works.
- It's for this reason that here-to-for the Apostle Paul, by the Holy Spirit, has been stripping these Jews in Rome of any notion that works, works.

- It's important to understand that these Jews rested on their Jewish laurels, if you will, fancying themselves as religious and moral under the law.
- This explains why Paul has had to dismantle, and even demolish, their self-perceived piety so they will realize that grace is apart from the law.
- Furthermore, in what would arguably be both explosive, and repulsive, he levels the playing field by saying this grace is for Jews and Gentiles.

- With that as our back-story leading up to this point, we're now ready to see why it is that grace works, and why it is that it's not works that works.
- Perhaps a better to say it would be; Paul has broken ground and the soil of their heart is now supple enough to receive the seed of God's grace.
- This is where we see our first one found in verses one through three where Paul takes them back to the most esteemed figure in Israel's history.

1. When it's not about what I am doing (Verses 1-3)

(1) What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? (2) If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. (3) What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

- v1 Paul brings Abraham, their "forefather," into the picture, and asks another rhetorical question about what he had discovered in this matter.
- v2 He tells them that if Abraham was justified by works he would've had something to boast about, though he couldn't have boasted before God.
- v3 Paul here quotes the scripture found in Genesis 15:6 which says that "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness."

- So, The question now becomes, why would Paul seemingly direct their attention to how their forefather Abraham was justified before God.
- The answer to this just so happens to also be the lesson that can be learned in this; grace works when it's not about what I am doing for God.
- I would suggest that Paul is showing them that it didn't have anything to do with Abraham, nor did it have anything to do with what Abraham did.

- Abraham was not justified by works, i.e., his willingness to leave Er of the Caldeas, or his willingness to sacrifice his only begotten son Isaac.
- Neither was it the covenant he had with God. It had nothing to do with him. In other words, God made a covenant with Abraham, not vice-versa.
- Abraham was in a deep sleep when God "cut-covenant" with Abraham, so in effect, Abraham didn't have anything to do with God's covenant.

- It's not what we have done for God, it's what God has done for us. If it had anything to do with what we've done then we would be able to boast.
- I am keenly aware that this may sound like a firm grasp of the obvious but have you ever wondered why we're human beings not human doings.
- Also, when Jesus preached His sermon on the mount, He gave us what are called the "beatitudes." They are not called the do-attitudes!

- I'll take it a step further and suggest that replete throughout the pages of Holy Writ, "being" is woven into the fabric of scripture, not "doing."
- One of my favorites is Psalm 46:10 which says; "be still and know that I am God." Notice that it's "be" still and not "do" still. You can't "do" still!
- Grace works when it can "be" grace, and grace does not work when it has to "do" work. In other words, grace is "being," and works is "doing."